



**EL DORADO COUNTY
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY**

Public Health

**Daniel Nielson, M.P.A.
Director**

**Robert Hartmann, MD
Public Health Officer**

Date: 9/13/2012

To: Local Providers

From: Dr. Robert Hartmann, MD

Subject: **Influenza Vaccine or Masking of Health Care Workers during Influenza Season**

As Public Health Officer of El Dorado County, I am requiring that all licensed health care facilities in El Dorado County implement a program requiring their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while working in patient care areas.

Each year influenza infection affects 5% to 15% of the US population. Influenza leads to over 3 million hospitalization days and 31 million outpatient visits yearly. Patients in our health care facilities are particularly vulnerable to influenza. Health care workers are both at risk for influenza and capable of transmitting the virus to their patients.

In your role as health care professionals and mine as Public Health Officer, we share the common goal of minimizing the spread of infectious disease. Influenza vaccination of HCWs protects patients and reduces employee absenteeism during influenza season. State law requires that general acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If hospital employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination. While compliance rates with these laws are high, actual HCW vaccination rates are not and may be below that required to create effective immunity within the workforce to suppress the spread of infection. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to greater than 90%. In addition, pending legislation will require that all hospitals achieve an influenza vaccination rate of 90% by 2015.

Our goals are to increase rates of influenza vaccination of HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism during influenza season, and reduce HCW to patient transmission of influenza thereby reducing influenza-related mortality and morbidity in El Dorado County.

Order

I, as the Public Health Officer of El Dorado County, am requiring that each and every licensed health care facility in El Dorado County implement a program requiring its health care workers to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while having direct patient contact or working in patient care areas.

Duration of Order

This order remains in effect from December 1st through March 31st for each successive annual influenza season unless otherwise modified, suspended or rescinded by the El Dorado County Health Officer. For the purposes of this order the influenza season in California is defined as December 1 through March 31 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate an unusually late peak with continued widespread influenza activity into the spring, an extension of this public health order may be necessary.

Facilities Subject to the Order

This order applies to hospitals, ambulatory and community clinics, skilled nursing and other long term care facilities, and any other licensed health care facility operating in El Dorado County.

Definition of HCWs

For the purposes of this order, "health care worker" is defined as a person, paid or unpaid, working in a health care setting who has direct patient contact or works in any patient care areas.

I appreciate your cooperation, assistance and support in protecting the residents of El Dorado County. If you have any questions, please contact El Dorado County Public Health Department at (530) 621-6374.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Hartmann MD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert Hartmann, MD
El Dorado County Public Health Officer